

Statement from Lt. Governor John Garamendi on the Southern California Wildfires

"I want to express my deepest condolences to those who have been affected, injured and displaced by the wildfires in Southern California. To date, nearly a half a million people have been displaced, over 450,000 acres burned, over 2300 structures destroyed or damaged, as many as 45 people injured and 5 deaths reported. Yet in spite of these dramatic losses, and the difficult weeks and months we expect ahead, Californians are coming together, working together, and preparing to rebuild together.

"In the midst of our state's tragedy, the valiant efforts of our firefighters, California National Guard members and other crews on the front lines -- from pilots in the helicopters and air tankers who face strong wind conditions to rescue personnel who are providing aid and comfort to those at evacuation centers -- have stood out as beacons of hope. On behalf of all Californians, I offer my sincere thank you for their bravery and sacrifice. Governor Schwarzenegger, the Office of Emergency Services, California Department of Forestry & Fire Protection and the other federal, state and local agencies that have performed extraordinarily also deserve commendation.

"As the winds begin to die down and we are able to take stock of our losses, it is also a time to look forward. In the days, weeks and months ahead, we must begin to ask ourselves a series of questions about how we can do even better to prevent, combat and recover from such a devastating event. We must also consider the degree to which global warming creates or perpetuates the conditions that allow these devastating wildfires to consume our state."

"Although these challenges are tremendous, throughout our state's history, Californians have proven they are leaders and survivors who can and will overcome."

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For the latest, up to date information, please visit Governor Schwarzenegger's website "Battling California's Wildfires" at <http://www.calfires.com/> .

You can also help by making a donation and volunteering at one of your local American Red Cross Centers:

San Diego/Imperial Counties <http://www.sdarc.org/>
Orange County at <http://www.oc-redcross.org/>
Los Angeles County at <http://www.redcrossla.org/>
Riverside County at <http://www.riversidecounty.redcross.org/>
Ventura County at <http://www.arcventura.org/>

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